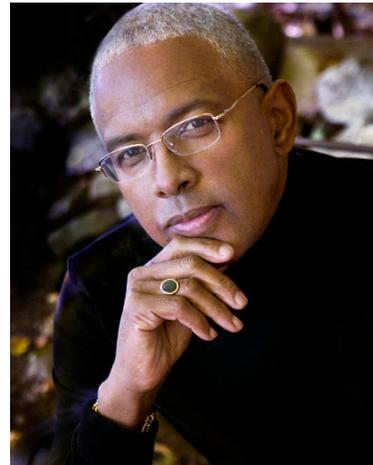


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## Glenn Tunstull 2018 Biography



Painter, illustrator and educator Glenn Tunstull has a pre-occupation with sky, water and light. It may well be what drew him to the Hudson River Valley after years of living in New York City and abroad. The change of seasons so evident in the Valley is the muse for his landscapes, both abstract and real, reminiscent of Georges Seurat's pointillist masterpieces. Since moving to upstate New York in 2002, Tunstull has painted every season, capturing the splendor of fall foliage along the Taconic, the blanketing of pristine snow from his studio window atop a hill in Claverack and the bucolic beauty of Hudson in spring and summer. While there is much to capture at home, Tunstull's love of art knows no borders. His settings, thus far, have extended from the pastoral elegance of Surrey, England, to the energetic and breathtaking colors of Bahia and Rio De Janeiro, from the beautiful and historical grandeur of Paris to the far-flung flourishes of Australia, Bali, Italy and Japan.

For a little more than a decade Tunstull has exhibited annually on Martha's Vineyard, building a recognizable body of work and a faithful following of fans and collectors.

"I remember my first show. I was slightly nervous as to how well it would go," he admits. "Then I made about \$20,000 in one weekend and my nerves were put to rest!"

Over the years Tunstull has expanded his "storytelling" to include vivid portrayals of life on the island, and his rich African-American heritage is on display in these works.

"I've always strived and will continue to strive to place the viewer in the setting of my work. I want to show a large part of the multi-cultural world that goes unseen, showing people of color far beyond the stereotypes. I feel my life has been one of breaking the mould and it's only natural that my work should reflect that as well," Tunstull explains.

Tunstull was always an artist, but not always a painter. As a child, he lived a gypsy-like existence with his parents, two brothers and sister, in New York, Detroit and Louisville, and cites his father's entrepreneurial spirit as the reason for their on-the-move lifestyle. When he was seven his Uncle Leroy drew a portrait of him with his parents and there is where it all began.

“As a child I tried to copy that drawing and I think in some ways I’ve been copying it ever since,” he says. Drawing came easy to Tunstull and it was the tool he used as a child to make friends during his family’s moves from city to city.

The first hint of Tunstull’s future success arrived in the form of a mail-order drawing competition. Organizers were so impressed with his abilities they sent a representative, unannounced, to the thirteen year-olds home to discuss nurturing his artistic career. What Tunstull learned from that visit was that art was a way to make a living, not just something one did for fun. After graduating a few years later from the prestigious Cass Technical High School in Detroit, Tunstull received a scholarship to Parsons, the New School for Design in New York City—after having been told by his school counselor not to apply and consider going into carpentry—and his career was set into orbit.

As one of the A-list fashion illustrators, who defined the 70s and 80s, Tunstull was fully steeped in the culture of clothes along with contemporaries Antonio Lopez and Kenneth Paul Block. His work graced the pages of renowned publications such as Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar, The New York Times and Women’s Wear Daily where he was the first African-American artist to illustrate at the respected title. The elite of fashion design and retail championed his work—from Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein and Joseph Abboud to Henri Bendel’s, Versace, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bloomingdales and Neiman Marcus. During this period he also illustrated several fashion and beauty books published by Simon & Schuster. Among them were The Beauty Principle by actress Victoria Principle, Katherine Klinger’s Book of Beauty and The Fashion Sketch Book by Bina Abling.

Tunstull remembers the period fondly. “It was a crazy time. I was working incredibly hard and making a lot of money but I think ultimately, you can only work at that pace for so long.”

At the tender age of twenty-five Tunstull moved first to Morocco, then Italy and France. Revitalized after leaving the frantic atmosphere of New York, he plied his craft at a more relaxed pace with some of the most prestigious names in Euro fashion. Hermes, Kenzo and Silvano Malta became regular clients. Additionally, Tunstull found himself as the subject rather than the artist when he was featured in Italian Vogue under the direction of editor Anna Piaggi.

Upon his return to the United States Tunstull expanded his editorial clientele to include The New York Times, GQ and Esquire magazines. On the design side he created images for Polo/Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein and entered the world of beauty working with L’Oreal and Revlon.

At the close of the twentieth century Tunstull unexpectedly entered a new realm. Teaching was added to his resume-- fashion drawing at the Fashion Institute of Technology and Pratt Institute, and advanced model drawing at his alma mater, Parson’s, the New School of Design, where he now teaches visual communications. In 2008 Tunstull joined the faculty of Marist College to teach fashion drawing and color theory.

A period of global travel, beginning in 1996, proved to be a turning point in Tunstull’s artistic endeavors. Starting with a trip to France, he created off-the-cuff documentary watercolors that faithfully recorded the scenes he experienced. Subsequent visits to Jamaica, Brazil, Australia,

Martha's Vineyard, and various other locations proved to be equally inspiring. Tunstull was particularly drawn to sites that combined water and sky, and the play of color. In 2000, he began painting in oil, creating expansive landscapes and seascapes based on close observation. As the work developed, a sense of abstraction emerged, while the desire to represent reality remained strongly present.

Tunstull reflects on his current lifestyle with a sense of characteristic humility. "My life as an artists is very different now. As an illustrator, I was presented with a project and a directive to present it in a specific way. Now, I decide what I find interesting, put it out there and allow others to make their own decisions about it," Tunstull states. It's very freeing," he adds.

Tunstull has committed some of that free time to giving back. For several years he has attended and provided art to the annual fundraising galas hosted by Urban Tech and Live Out Loud!, Additionally, he has shared his experience and knowledge through public speaking engagements with the Society of Illustrators, the Claverack, New York Library and most recently, as a featured speaker for the Marist College Brunch on Leadership in the Fashion Industry.

Life is frequently discussed as a circle and that theory is evident in the life of Glenn Tunstull. In the summer of 2013 an unexpected request came for Tunstull to create 75 fashion illustrations overnight for a television commercial for Modern Family star Sofia Vergara's Kmart fashion line. In true Glenn Tunstull style, he got it done and the commercial was shot two days later. The following spring, again unexpectedly, he was commissioned to create the brand image for the 28th annual Marist College Runway & Awards show. As with his landscapes, Tunstull allowed his surroundings to inspire him. He chose the gown design of a student, chose another student as the model and once again created a fashion image widely applauded.

In the midst of painting for two upcoming exhibits and completing a portrait commission, a call came from Europe. The result, two of his iconic illustrations from the 1970s featured in a London Fashion Week exhibit hosted by the prestigious UK gallery Gray M.C.A.

"I have a lot be thankful for. I'm doing what I love, travelling, painting, and making a living from of it. But it's all still a progression. As an artist, it's always about improving your craft. That's been my primary goal and always will be. My thinking is, it's never about the last painting. It's always about the next one."

## Solo Exhibitions

- 2017** Abstractions, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2016** Moments, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2015** Beach Musings, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2014** A Summer Day, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2013** Vineyard Moments, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2012** Vineyard Colors, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2011** Vineyard Perennials, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2010** Sumbrellas, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2009** Tranquility, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2008** Vineyard Colours, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2007** Recent Works, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2006** Recent Works, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2005** Oils and Watercolors, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2004** Vineyard Magic, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2003** Watercolors, Cousen Rose Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2002** Oils and Watercolors, Bloom, New York City
- 2001** Watercolors, Firehouse Gallery, Oak Bluffs, MA
- 2000** Watercolors, Studio Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

## Group Exhibitions

- 2017** Detroit Diaspora, The Carr Center Gallery, Detroit, MI
- 2016** Columbia County Council on the Arts, Hudson, NY
- 2013** Collections, E & S Gallery, Louisville, KY
- 2011** The Art of Giving, School of Visual Arts Gallery, New York, NY
- 2009** ArtsWalk Hudson, Cannonball Factory, Hudson, N.Y.
- 2008** Group Show, Pierre Paul Gallery, Ann Arbor, MI
- 2008** Spring Show, Kent Art Association, Kent, CT
- 2008** Vibrations, Shellnut Gallery, Renneselaer Polytech, Troy, NY
- 2007** ArtsWalk Hudson, Pocketbook Factory, Hudson, N.Y.
- 2007** ArtExpo New York, Jacob Javits Center, New York, N.Y.
- 2006** ArtsWalk Hudson, Pocketbook Factory, Hudson, New York
- 2003** Watercolors Annual Exhibitions, Niagara Watercolor Society,
- 2003** Juried Watercolor Exhibition, Stamford Art Association, Stamford, CT
- 2002** September 11th Remembered, National Arts Club, New York City

## Glenn Tunstull Artist Statement 2017



Drawing things that I saw or imagined has always been part of my life, providing a passageway to my inner mind that saw things that didn't exist in my life. As a child, we moved every year and I was always the new kid in school, whereby my drawings became a calling card in schools with new classmates. Walking into a fashion illustration course at Cass Technical HS in Detroit, as a lark, my career goals suddenly became clear. After spending a couple of years at Parsons School of Design in New York City, I started working in the fashion industry as an illustrator for some of the top global publishing beauty, design and retail operations over several decades. To be current, I had to constantly create new imagery for new campaigns which led to some iconic visual promotions in the U.S. and Europe. After over twenty-five years working commercially I gave into the stymied creative urge to paint landscapes that chronicled my global travels. My years of having honed my drawing and painting skills found a welcomed home in my landscapes of the Caribbean, Europe, South America and Asia. Later I developed an extensive catalog of images for my Martha's Vineyard community that even included some portraits.

The current iteration of my work has replaced scenes for shapes and things for lines. The basic focus in my new work is the balance of colors and forms interwoven dynamically into unique compositions. Having retreated from literally interpreting images as witnessed from the outside, the work now reflects the abstractly composed images that exist inside. The refrain from using dependable referential images in drawing and painting was daunting at first because the new aesthetic required the elimination of them. The freedom that has come with this expression is a welcoming change whereby the uncertainty of the outcome makes the unknown journey that much more exhilarating.

The new series of works included here have grown out of linear gestural strokes as the foundation of each composition. The curvilinear layouts are then filled in with colors that blend into one another creating an infinite succession of tones and shapes, purposefully moving the eye about the canvas. The compositions generally are designed to be viewed from any angle, allowing the viewer to determine which angle of the painting resonates with them more. The colors range from intuitive selections that reflect an earlier color story to a more limited palette of neutral hues that constrain the creative flourishes a bit more. The first set of oil paintings was designed as a diptych. Entitled "Flora / Fauna" because of the obvious similarity to nature through form and color was not created to suggest those entities but seemed to feel like that when completed. Subsequent paintings were based on similar foundations, each subsequently veering away from the pronounced linear elements of the preceding work. The final painting included here, "Dance", and stands as a tonally fluid rendition of the preceding works. The results were probably most surprising to me since I hadn't foreseen their outcomes as I had in my earlier art career efforts.